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SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL PROGRESS ON HCMC HOUSE CHURCH REGISTRATIONS

REF: DRL/IRF - CONGEN HCMC 12/10 EMAIL

¶1. (SBU) According to data provided by the the HCMC Committee for Religious Affairs (CRA) on December 12, over the past few months the city's district governments have registered 66 meeting points belonging to 27 Protestant house church organizations. Groups registered include the Pentacostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, HCMC's five previously non-registered Baptist organizations, Presbyterians, Methodists, Assemblies of God and the United Gospel Outreach Church. The size of registered congregations ranged from 10 up to 300, representing in all approximately 5,000 worshipers. The list of locally-registered churches includes congregations affiliated with some of the most prominent leaders of the HCMC house church movement: Pastor Pham Dinh Nhan of the Vietnam Evangelical Fellowship, Pastor Ngoc Hien of the Vietnam Baptist Fellowship, and Pastor Doan Trung Tin of Vietnam Good News Mission.

¶2. (SBU) Additional congregations will be registered in the future as they step forward, HCMC CRA officials told us. According to the CRA, after these churches demonstrate that they are operating "stably" for some time, the parent organizations of each denomination will be able to apply for provincial and national-level registration. Our CRA contacts emphasized that these registrations are in addition to the HCMC churches affiliated with the four denominations -- Mennonite, Seventh Day Adventist, Grace Baptist, and United World Mission Church (UWMC) -- that already have received provincial, and in the case of the UWMC, national, registration in 2005 and 2006.

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